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ABSTRACT

A study examined the relationship of the respondent and averaged associate ratings on the Listening Practices Feedback Report (LPFR). As part of LPFR listening training sessions, LPFR respondent and associate(s) scores were gathered from several major companies and organizations. Each subject completed an LPFR on his/her own listening behavior and then had six colleagues or associates fill out an LPFR on the listening behavior of the subject. The respondent's LPFR rating for each item was subtracted from the averaged associate rating for that item to produce a differenc score. These were then factor analyzed to examine the dimensio structure underlying respondent/associate differences. Results indicated that: (1) in general, the underlying constructs of t respondent LPFR and the associate LPFR were not strongly related; (2) the perceptions that others had of an individual's acceptance of the listening role were related to how that individual rated him/herself on avoiding becoming defensive and responding emotionally; (3) associate's perceptions of an individual's professional/businesslike listening practices were related to the way the individual rated himself on professional/businesslike listening; and (3) the single factor which accounted for most of the variance on the differences scores was differences in perceptions concerning the respondent's listening for information without regard to status. Findings support a "transactional" nature of listening. (Nine tables of data and a figure showing the relationships among the difference factors on the LPFR training instrument are included; 39 references are attached.) (RS)

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An Analysis of Respondent/Average Associate Differences on the Listening Practices Feedback Report

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An Analysis of Respondent/Average Associates' Differences on the Listening Practices Feedback Report

In an analysis of twenty-five studies of the communication skills most needed by students for success in organizational settings, DiSalvo (1980) found listening to be the most commonly identified pragmatic skill. Listening skills are necessary for success for both subordinates and supervisors. Downs and Conrad (1982) conclude that listening ranks fifth among eleven important communication skills for managers as superiors, and first for managers as subordinates. Subordinates consider poor listening skill the second most contributing factor in unsuccessful communication interactions. Personnel managers consider listening the "most troublesome communication situation for all employees" when they are evaluating their communication training needs (Hanna, 1978).

Listening skills are a very important tool for effective management because they help to create a supportive climate for both employers and employees (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987). Lobdell, Sonada, and Arnold (1991) found that the way subordinates perceive their supervisor's listening behavior is significantly related to subordinate's perceptions of their supervisor's responsiveness, their perception of the general openness of the organization, and to the perceptions of the subordinates own empowerment, or ability to influence the organization and to make decisions regarding their own work.

Both scholars and individuals working in business and industry consider listening one of the most important communication skills contributing to both the success of the individual in the organization and to the success of the organization in the world market (DiSalvo, Larsen, & Seiler, 1976; Golen, 1980; Hanna, 1978; Mundale, 1980; Smeltzer, 1979; Smith, 1978; Steil, Barker & Watson, 1983).

Listening ability can be assessed in several ways. Direct measures of listening ability are available and can be administered to individuals to asses their listening ability. Many of these listening tests have been developed and used in assessment, research and training (Watson & Barker, 1988). Listeners' behavior, such as body movements, can be examined for their effect on interaction (Harrigan, 1985). Individuals can also be asked to report their perceptions of their own listening skill (Husband, Cooper & Monsour, 1988; Norton and Pettegrew, 1979) and the listening skills of others (Emmert, 1986; Lobdell, Sonoda, & Arnold, 1991; Rhodes, 1987).

Currently several listening researchers are engaged in developing self-report instruments to measure listening in the business environment (Arnold, 1989; Husband, Cooper, & Monsour, 1988; Lobdell, Sonoda, & Arnold, 1991). The Listening Practices Feedback Report (LPFR) is a self-report measure of listening practices developed by Richard Brandt and Janice Brandt of Brandt Management Group, Inc. (Brandt, Brandt, Emmert & Emmert, 1992). Since 1982 it has been used

both to study listening in the business environment and to deliver listening training in over 100 organizations with thousands of individuals.

The LPFR is administered in two forms prior to the Brandt Management training program. Each practice/item used is worded differently on these forms. Form I, on blue paper, is worded so that the individual fills out the items for him/herself (To what extent do you take time, have patience, when listening to others?). Instructions then ask the recipient to put their own name on several alternately worded forms, Form II's on cream paper, and give them to colleagues or subordinates. These Form II's ask the associates to fill out the items for the designated person named at the top of the page (To what extent does this person take time, have patience, when listening to you?). These designated individuals remain anonymous. Provided a minimum of three individuals have responded to the target person, anonymous feedback from the average of the associates rating the individual is given to the individual during the Brandt Management Group, Inc. listening training program.

This study examines the relationship of the respondent and average associate ratings on the LPFR. Implicit in the return of the associates' feedback to the respondent is the theory that the two instruments are related to one another since they share the same listening practices items.

One of the unique features of the LPFR is that the items used in the instrument were generated by individuals similar to those with whom the instrument is designed to be used. During the construction of the LPFR individuals in the business environment were asked to name three individuals, boss, supervisor, and peer, or subordinate, who the individual perceived to be good listeners and three perceived to be poor listeners. They were then asked to list at least five criteria that they used to determine their selection of individuals as effective or ineffective listeners. These criteria were used to create the items on the LPFR.

Many perceived listening skill instruments' items are generated using theoretical constructs from previous research and popular "how to" texts (Hunt & Cusella, 1983) and reviewed by managers or other scholars for their face validity (Husband, Cooper and Monsour, 1988). The relationship between the respondent and average associate LPFR forms would be predicted to be particularly close because they were subject generated for bosses, subordinates and peers in the business environment.

An examination of the multidimensional nature of the LPFR, however, generated separate factor solutions for the respondent LPFR and the averaged associates' LPFR. (Emmert, Emmert and Brandt, 1992). The respondent LPFR produced six underlying constructs: acceptance of the listening role, avoiding emotional responses, memory/recall, an empathic

nonjudgmental attitude, listener as speaker, and a business/professional listening factor. The averaged associates LPFR produced three factors: acceptance of the listening role, appropriate business/professional listening, and supportive listening.

Attribution theory (Bem, 1972; Jones and Nisbett, 1971; Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, and Maracek, 1973; Storms, 1971) suggests that actors, such as respondents, perceive their behavior as a more complex situational response to present conditions, while observers, such as associates, see their peers behavior as resulting from broad personality characteristics or personal dispositions. This is consistent with the number of dimensions discovered in the multidimensional analysis of listening behavior measured by the LPFR.

In order to clarify the relationship between respondents' rating of their listening behavior and associates perceptions of the listening behavior of those same respondents, the following research questions are examined in this study:

1) What is the relationship between respondent and associate LPFR?

2) What dimensions/constructs underlie the difference between respondent LPFR's and averaged associate LPFR's?

3) Is the relationship between respondent LPFR and average associate LPFR the same for different degrees of difference?

METHOD

As part of LPFR listening training sessions LPFR respondent and associate(s) scores were gathered from several major companies and organizations, including a major volunteer association, a bank, a hospital, an instructional design group and a general management group from several different organizations.

Before the training sessions each respondent was asked to fill out Form I of the LPFR on their own listening behavior and to give a separate copy of Form II to six associates/colleagues to fill out on the listening behavior of the respondent. The associate forms were averaged to produce an average associate rating identical to the one given to respondents on the LPFR Training Instrument during the subsequent training sessions. This is the same data used in the Emmert, Emmert and Brandt (1992) study.

The respondents LPFR rating for each individual item, was subtracted from the average associate rating for that item to produce a difference score. These scores were then added to produce a total LPFR difference scores. These difference scores were then factor analyzed to examine the dimensional structure underlying respondent/associate differences. Individual LPFR difference items were chosen to represent a factor if they loaded .5 or greater on that factor and no more than .2 on any other factor, if they

loaded .6 or greater on that factor and no more than .4 on any other factor.

The respondent LPFR scores were used to generate two groups: those rating themselves above the mean on the respondent LPFR and those rating themselves below the mean. Within each respondent group, average associate LPFR scores were used to create two groups: those rating the respondent above average for that respondent group and those rating the respondent below average. This resulted in four similarity/different groups:

Above average respondents/rated above average for above average respondents by their associates (similar)

Above average respondents/rated below average for above average respondents by their associates (different)

Below average respondents/rated above average for below average respondents (different)

Below average respondents/rated below average for below average respondents (similar)

These groups were used to examine the nature of different degrees of respondent/associate differences.

RESULTS

The groups were not significantly different from one another on the mean of respondents scores on the LPFR (mean=108, F=.88, p=.48), the mean of combined associates scores (mean=111, F=.81, p=.52), the mean number of

associates' responses which were averaged in the combined associates scores (mean=5.3 ,F=.31, p=.87), the mean of a single randomly chosen individual rater for each respondent (mean=112, F=1.55, p=.19) or the mean of the difference scores between respondent and associate ratings (mean=2.4, F=.11, p=.98). For the remaining analyses the groups were combined.

In order to examine the relationship between respondent and associate perceptions of those respondents, the three factors derived from the averaged associates' LPFR ratings were correlated with the six factors derived from the respondents' LPFR ratings (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Intercorrelations Among Associate and Respondent Factors on the LPFR

Respondent Factors	Associate Factors: Acceptance 1	Professional 2	Supportive 3
1 Acceptance	-.00	.05	-.00
2 Emotional Avoidance	.28*	.09	-.01
3 Memory	-.15	.02	.01
4 Empathy	.06	.10	.04
5 Listener Speaking	.02	.07	.13
6 Professional	-.01	.22*	.05

N of cases = 123 1-tailed significance *.01

The respondent factor of emotional avoidance was associated with the associate factor of acceptance of the listening role. The respondent factor of professional

listening correlated positively with the associate factor of professional listening.

A varimax factor analysis on the 28 LPFR respondent/associate difference ratings produced eight factors which accounted for 63% of the variance (see Table 2.) The starred items represent those participant practices which were used to identify that particular dimension of listening.

TABLE 2

Factor Analysis for Respondent/Associate Difference Scores

LPFR Items	Factor Loadings							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6-ask relevant questions for clarification on points that are technical/misunderstood	.7*							
2-listen to someone without regard to official status or position	.7*							
11-accurately recall comments/position at a later time	.6			.4				
17-smiles/acknowledges a clever remark	.5					.4	.4	
14-listen with an open mind, free from personal bias,	.5	.5		.3				
13-encourages others to give views on the subject/topic under discussion	.4		.4					
27-considers content/logic, not critical of speaker's delivery, appearance, grammar, vocabulary, etc.		.8*						
25-places himself/herself in others position, understands other's concern and feelings	.3	.5*						
5-maintain proper balance, not talking more than listening		.6			.5	.3		
16-listen with sincerity not false/go-through-the-motions attitude		.5	.3					

Table 2 (cont.)

LPFR Items	Factor Loadings							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
26-responds in an unemotional manner/ avoids (trigger) words/ phrases/cliches which cause people to "tune-out/turn-off"		.5	.4					
4-give appropriate non-verbal signals indicating attention			.8*					
3-give the speaker full attention, not preoccupied with other concerns			.7*		.4			
12-follow-up with prompt, correct action on points agreed to			.5	.4				
7-prepares/becomes informed when such is necessary				.7*				
8-keep a confidence		.3		.7*				
19-accurately relates messages to third party	.4		.4	.6				
18-correctly anticipates where the discussion is going	.4		.3	.4				
10-permits a proper topic closure/agreement before changing topic					.8*			
20-maintains appropriate degree of eye contact when speaking/listening			.4		.5			-.3
15-avoids becoming emotional/ defensive when difficult situation is encountered	.4				.5			.4
1-take time, have patience, when listening	.4	.3			.5			
22-prohibits/hold to a minimum, outside distractions when in a discussion or meeting, (phone calls or staff)						.9*		
21-permits speaker to continue without interruptions						.9*		
28-ask the speaker to speak louder/clearer when situation calls for it							.7*	
23-responds/paraphrases comments to ensure understanding							.7*	

Table 2 (cont.)

LPFR Items	Factor Loadings							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9-take notes when appropriate				.5			.5	
24-thinks about the subject under discussion before responding								.9

Factor Names	Eigenvalue	% Variance Accounted For
1 non-status information seeking	7.7	27.6
2 supportiveness	1.9	6.6
3 attentiveness	1.9	6.2
4 gatekeeping	1.6	5.8
5 listening acceptance	1.3	4.7
6 non-interruptions	1.2	4.2
7 listener speaking	1.1	3.8
8 deliberation	1.0	3.6

The factors associated with the differences scores, including the ones represented by a single item, were correlated with one another (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

Intercorrelations Among Respondent/Associate Difference Factors on the LPFR

Factor	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 non-status information seeking	.18	.18	.23*	.14	.19	.14	.04
2 supportiveness		.38**	.41**	.20	.25*	.14	-.04
3 attentiveness			.27*	.34**	.16	.29**	-.03
4 gatekeeping				.31**	.30**	.28*	.05
5 listening acceptance					.21*	.13	.02
6 non-interruptions						.18	.10
7 listener speaking							.02
8 deliberation							

N of cases = 123 1-tailed significance * - .01 ** -.001

Non-status listener information seeking is positively associated with effective gatekeeping. Listener supportiveness is positively correlated with attentiveness, effective gatekeeping, and providing a non-interruptive listening climate. Listener attentiveness is positively related to supportiveness, effective gatekeeping, listening acceptance, and listener speaking. Effective gatekeeping is positively correlated with, non-status information seeking, supportiveness, attentiveness, listening acceptance, a non-interruptive climate, and listener speaking. Acceptance of the listening role is positively associated with attentiveness, effective gatekeeping, and providing a non-interruptive listening climate. Providing a non-interruptive listening climate is positively correlated with supportiveness, effective gatekeeping and listener acceptance. Listener as speaker is associated with attentiveness and effective gatekeeping. Deliberation fails to correlate significantly with any other factor.

The four similarity difference groups were created using the procedure described in the methods section. The mean and standard deviation for respondent LPFR, average associate LPFR, and total disagreement scores for each group are reported in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Means/Standard Deviations for Respondent, Associate and Difference Score for Similarity/Difference Groups

	N	Mean	s.d
Above Average Respondents			
Above Average Associates			
Respondent LPFR	32	114.34	5.16
Associates LPFR	32	118.17	5.92
Difference Score	32	3.76	4.42
Below Average Associates			
Respondent LPFR	33	117.70	5.83
Associates LPFR	33	104.94	9.84
Difference Score	33	13.27	9.48
Below Average Respondents			
Above Average Associates			
Respondent LPFR	31	98.00	5.40
Associates LPFR	31	116.48	4.62
Difference Score	31	18.45	4.07
Below Average Associates			
Respondent LPFR	27	102.11	5.81
Associates LPFR	27	103.71	8.33
Difference Score	27	1.45	7.70

The eight factors derived from the disagreement factor analysis were correlated with total disagreement scores for above average respondents with above average associates ratings (see Table 5).

TABLE 5

Correlation of Disagreement Factors With Total Disagreement Score for Above Average Respondents/Above Average Associates

Factors	Total Disagreement
1 non-status information seeking	.18
2 supportiveness	.13
3 attentiveness	.12
4 gatekeeping	.50*
5 listening acceptance	.32
6 non-interruptions	.06
7 listener speaking	.47*
8 deliberation	.31

N of cases = 32 1-tailed significance *-.01 **-.001

Disagreement about effective gatekeeping listening behavior and the performance of the listener when speaking as a listener are positively correlated with total disagreement for this group.

The eight factors derived from the disagreement factor analysis were correlated with total disagreement scores for above average respondents with below average associates ratings (see Table 6).

TABLE 6

Correlation of Disagreement Factors With Total Disagreement Score for Above Average Respondents/Below Average Associates

Factors	Total Disagreement
1 non-status information seeking	.33
2 supportiveness	.73**
3 attentiveness	.32
4 gatekeeping	.72**
5 listening acceptance	.52**
6 non-interruptions	.51*
7 listener speaking	.04
8 deliberation	-.08

N of cases = 33 1-tailed significance *-.01 **-.001

Disagreement about supportiveness, effective gatekeeping listening, acceptance of the listening role, and providing a non-interruptive climate for listening correlate positively with total disagreement for this group.

The eight factors derived from the disagreement factor analysis were correlated with total disagreement scores for below average respondents with above average associates ratings (see Table 7).

TABLE 7

Correlation of Disagreement Factors With Total Disagreement Score for Below Average Respondents/Above Average Associates

Factors	Total Disagreement
1 non-status information seeking	-.03
2 supportiveness	.18
3 attentiveness	.31
4 gatekeeping	.22
5 listening acceptance	.42*
6 non-interruptions	.23
7 listener speaking	.08
8 deliberation	.10

N of cases = 31 1-tailed significance *-.01 **-.001

Only disagreement over acceptance of the listening role is positively associated with total disagreement scores for this group.

The eight factors derived from the disagreement factor analysis were correlated with total disagreement scores for below average respondents with below average associates ratings (see Table 8).

TABLE 8

Correlation of Disagreement Factors With Total Disagreement Score for Below Average Respondents/Below Average Associates

Factors	Total Disagreement
1 non-status information seeking	.44
2 supportiveness	.25
3 attentiveness	.25
4 gatekeeping	.36
5 listening acceptance	.37
6 non-interruptions	.28
7 listener speaking	.32
8 deliberation	.06

N of cases = 27 1-tailed significance *-.01 **-.001

All of the disagreement factors fail to significantly correlate with total disagreement score for this group.

In order to clarify the relationship between respondent LPFR and average associate LPFR for different degrees of disagreement individual item LPFR difference scores were correlated with the total differences for each similarity/difference group (see Table 9).

TABLE 9

Significant Correlations Between Item Difference Scores and Total Difference Score For Similarity/Difference Groups

Above Average Respondent/Above Average Associates		
11	accurate recall	.50*
18	change topic before closure	.45*
19	accurately relay messages	.56**
23	paraphrase	.51*
Above Average Respondent/Below Average Associates		
1	take time, patience	.49*
5	not monopolize by talking	.54**
7	prepare/become informed	.58**
8	keep a confidence	.66**
10	change topic before closure	.52**
11	accurate recall	.68**
12	prompt follow-up on agreed points	.43*
13	encourage others to give views	.51*
14	listen with open mind, free from bias	.58**
15	not become emotional/defensive	.46*
17	smile/acknowledge witty remark	.44*
19	relay messages accurately	.57**
21	not interrupt others	.51*
25	place self in other's position	.56**
26	not respond with emotional words	.47*
27	not critical of speaker's delivery	.48*
Below Average Respondent/Above Average Associates		
1	take time, patience	.43*
3	full attention/not preoccupied	.48*
10	change topic before closure	.42*
12	prompt follow-up on agreed points	.66**
26	not respond with emotional words	.50*
Below Average Respondent/Below Average Associates		
1	take time, patience	.70**
2	listen without regard to status	.49*
14	listen with open mind, free from bias	.47*
15	not become emotional/defensive	.57**
26	not respond with emotional words	.53*

1-tailed significance *-.01 **-.001

DISCUSSION

In general the underlying constructs of the respondent LPFR and the associate LPFR are not strongly related. The perceptions that others have of an individual's acceptance of the listening role are related to how that individual

rates himself/herself on avoiding becoming defensive and responding emotionally. In addition associates' perceptions of an individual's professional/businesslike listening practices is related to the way the individual rates himself on professional/businesslike listening. This latter relationship is particularly important since the validity of the LPFR is in its use in listening training in a business setting.

The factor analysis of the differences scores between the respondents' self ratings and the average associate ratings on the LPFR offers greater help in explaining the lack of a relationship between the two forms when considered individually. The single factor which accounts for most of the variance on the differences scores is differences in perception concerning the respondent's listening for information without regard to status. This is related to differences in perception regarding effective gatekeeping listening.

Effective gatekeeping listening is positively associated with all the other emergent factors (except deliberation which has shown a consistent pattern throughout analyses using the LPFR of being a single independent item) and may serve as a core for understanding the other dimensions. Different perceptions about the respondent's effective gatekeeping listening are related to differences in perceptions concerning the respondent's supportiveness and attentiveness during listening. Using business channels

to become informed and accurately relay information while keeping confidences of your associates may be perceived as indicating attentiveness and supportiveness in listening. Predictably, differences in perception concerning the respondent's supportiveness are related to differences in attentiveness as well. The use of attentiveness cues to signal support is important in any listening context, including the business environment.

Disagreements concerning effective gatekeeping listening relate to disagreements about the respondent's acceptance of the role of listener, such as permitting topic closure before attempting to change the topic, as well as disagreements concerning the non-interruptive nature of the listening environment, and how effective the listener is speaking as a listener. Successful gatekeeping listening is associated with being successful on each of the other dimensions of listening.

The complexity of the positive relationships among the disagreement factors can be represented in the diagram on the following page. It is easy to see that what are typically considered effective listening skills relate to one another as well as to effective gatekeeping listening.

The dimensions underlying the disagreements scores as a whole are not equally represented in the four similarity/difference groups when the factors' relationships to overall difference score within each group are examined. When associates and respondents perceive the listening skill

of the respondent as above average the associate is most likely to perceive the respondent as being more effective in gatekeeping listening and speaking as a listener than the respondent perceives himself/herself. When respondents perceive their listening skill below average but the associates perceive it as above average for their group, the associate is most likely to perceive the respondent as being more effective in listener acceptance.

When respondents perceive their listening skill above average but the associates perceive it as below average for the respondent's group, the associates are most likely to perceive the respondent as being less effective in supportiveness, gatekeeping listening, listening acceptance and providing a non-interruptive listening environment. This group is the target for most listening training and the factor analysis offers some suggestions for focusing on these dimensions during training in the business environment.

The failure of any factor to correlate with difference scores in the below average respondent rating/below average associate group is problematic. Since the mean score on the respondent LPFR for this group is 102 (or a mean of 3.6 per item) and the associate LPFR mean is 103 (or a mean of 3.7) subjects are not bottoming out on the 5 point scale used with the LPFR. It may mean that as a whole listeners tend to perceive themselves as "average" listeners even when they are listening poorly. If this is true, then the bottom of

the scale for all practical purposes is the middle. This interpretation is supported by a comparison of the mean difference scores for all groups. The low score of 1.45 for this group might not allow sufficient disagreement to occur in this group for factors to correlate with the total disagreement score. The N for this group was also slightly lower than for the other groups and including more subjects might affect the significance of the relationships.

An analysis of the individual LPFR disagreement items for this group did find five individual items which correlated significantly with total disagreement scores for this group. One single item, taking time and having patience when listening correlated with the total difference scores for this group higher than any other item for any group. The differences in this group need further examination.

This study of listening supports the "transactional" nature of listening in which greater understanding of the listening process occurs when both respondent and associate perceptions are used to create the dimensions which underlie a shared definition of listening effectiveness.

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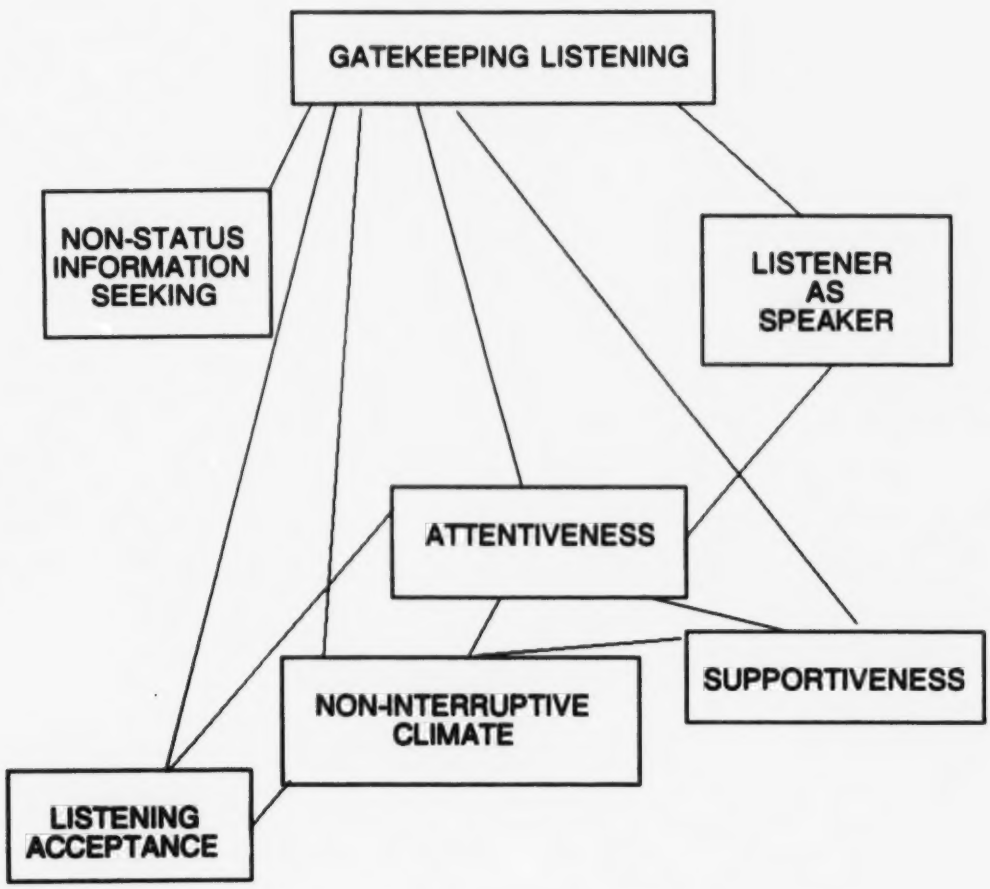
DIAGRAM 1

VISUALIZATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG DIFFERENCE FACTORS ON THE LISTENING PRACTICES FEEDBACK REPORT TRAINING INSTRUMENT



Victoria Emmert